

Office of the
SENIORS' ADVOCATE

Activity Plan
2020 - 2023



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The Office of the Seniors' Advocate
Newfoundland and Labrador
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St. John's NL, A1E 0A1



MESSAGE FROM THE SENIORS' ADVOCATE



I am pleased to present the 2020 - 2023 Activity Plan for the Office of the Seniors' Advocate. This Office is a Statutory Office of the House of Assembly of Newfoundland and Labrador. It has been designated as a Category 3 entity as per the **Transparency and Accountability Act**. As such, this Office is required to prepare an Activity Plan that sets clear direction for its activities for the next three years.

This plan is written in consideration of the Legislative authority of this Office under the **Seniors' Advocate Act**. As the Seniors' Advocate for Newfoundland and Labrador I am accountable for the preparation of this plan and achievement of the objectives.

As the Seniors' Advocate for Newfoundland and Labrador I spend much time engaging and interacting with seniors, their families and stakeholders. I welcome all calls, emails, visits and letters from people who have a vested interest in systemic seniors' issues. In the past, my staff and I travelled extensively throughout the province listening carefully to what seniors have to say. However, now that we are living under restrictions due to Covid-19, travel during 2020 is most definitely curtailed. For the foreseeable future, we will depend on technology, telephones and letters to network with seniors.

In September 2019 my office released a report **Long May Your Big Jib Draw**, detailing the major systemic issues impacting seniors. The findings of that report are the activities we will be undertaking over the next few years. This Activity Plan outlines the overarching issues which are the foundation for our work, how we will move forward to ensure positive change, and the performance measures we will undertake over the next three years.

Sincerely,

Suzanne Brake, PhD
Seniors' Advocate



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OVERVIEW

The Office of the Seniors' Advocate was created through the **Seniors' Advocate Act** which was proclaimed on December 14, 2016. The Act and Regulations came into force on July 5, 2017. Authority and duties for the Office are outlined in the Act.

Dr. Suzanne Brake was appointed as Newfoundland and Labrador's first Seniors' Advocate on November 7, 2017. Dr. Brake's first term is for six years. Each year the Seniors' Advocate must report to the House of Assembly through the Speaker of the House of Assembly on the exercise and performance of her powers and duties under the Act.

The Office has four staff: the Advocate, two Systemic Advocacy Consultants and an Administrative Officer. The Advocate is an independent Officer of the House of Assembly and reports directly to the Legislature through the Speaker. The other staff members are part of the Public Service of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador.

The House of Assembly Management Commission approved the Office's budget of \$500,000 for fiscal year 2019 - 2020:

Salaries	\$ 386,400
Employee Benefits	5,700
Transportation and Communications	48,900
Supplies	5,000
Professional Services	9,000
Purchased Services	44,000
Property, Furnishings and Equipment	1,000
TOTAL	\$ 500,000

Whenever possible, documents produced by this Office follow clear language guidelines by using plain text and setting up pages with a left-side alignment. Documents also follow Canadian National Institute for the Blind's accessibility guidelines.

In this Activity Plan, bold fonts are used rather than italics or underlining. As well, the font is a san-serif style in a minimum 12-point size.



MANDATE

The mandate of the Office of the Seniors' Advocate is to address systemic issues impacting seniors. Systemic issues are problems in an overall system rather than a specific or individual concern.

The Office will:

- identify, review and analyze systemic issues;
- work collaboratively with seniors' organizations, service providers and others to identify and address systemic issues; and
- make recommendations to government and government agencies respecting changes to improve services to and for seniors.

In carrying out the powers and duties of the Office the Seniors' Advocate may

- (a) receive and review matters related to seniors;
- (b) initiate and participate in reviews related to seniors;
- (c) conduct research related to seniors, including interviews and surveys;
- (d) consult with seniors, service providers and the public;
- (e) request information, other than personal health information within the meaning of the **Personal Health Information Act** and personal information within the meaning of the **Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act, 2015** ;
- (f) make recommendations to government, government agencies, service providers and community groups respecting legislation, policies, programs and services impacting seniors; and
- (g) inform the public about the Office of the Seniors' Advocate and promote awareness of systemic issues related to seniors.

LINES OF BUSINESS

Systemic Advocacy

Systemic issues impact large numbers of people. The Office of the Seniors' Advocate can identify, analyze and review systemic matters related to seniors. These systemic issues are brought to the attention of the Office through input from individuals, organizations, and service providers; as well as research and media reports. The issues fall under five broad categories: health care, personal care, housing, transportation or finances.

Systemic reviews may include research, consultations and information requests. Conclusions drawn from reviews may form the basis of recommendations to



government, government agencies, service providers and community groups respecting legislation, policies, programs and services impacting seniors. The Advocate will closely monitor all recommendations to assess how they are implemented.

Collaboration

The Office of the Seniors' Advocate works with seniors' organizations, public or private service providers (as per the regulations in the Act) that fund or deliver seniors' services, and others to identify and address systemic seniors' issues.

This Office does not investigate individual seniors' issues. If the Seniors' Advocate becomes aware of an individual senior's matter where that senior feels he/she has been treated unfairly or unjustly by a government department or agency, the Advocate may refer that senior to the Office of the Citizens' Representative.

Seniors may be referred to other appropriate resources or those who need information on programs or services are referred to SeniorsNL which can help seniors anywhere in the province. SeniorsNL records the details from all calls on its electronic tracking system. This information is also available to the Office to help with its systemic monitoring.

Public Awareness

The Seniors' Advocate listens to seniors and voices their concerns. The Office of the Seniors' Advocate works to make sure the public is aware of its duties and powers. Members of the public are invited to contact the Office for information about the **Seniors' Advocate Act** and the operation of the Office.

The Advocate has committed to ongoing outreach throughout the province to gather data and share information with the public, especially seniors. Where it is in the public interest, or in the interest of a person, department or government agency, the Advocate may publish reports as related to the Advocate's powers and duties. These reports may or may not be the subject of a report made to the House of Assembly under this Act.

PRIMARY CLIENTS

The primary clients of the Office of the Seniors' Advocate are seniors. The systemic needs of older adults is the main concern of this Office. The **Seniors' Advocate Act** defines a "senior" as an individual who is 65 years of age or older, or less than 65 years of age and receives seniors' services. "Seniors' services" are the programs, services or



systems of support, prescribed in the regulations, that are related to health care, personal care, housing, transportation or finances that are used by or associated with seniors. "Service providers" means the public or private persons or bodies prescribed in the regulations who fund or deliver, in whole or in part, seniors' services.

VALUES

The Office of the Seniors' Advocate believes strongly in its role as an independent voice for seniors in this province. Every effort is taken to ensure that the integrity and core values of this Office are reflected in its service to the public and in its internal activities.

Value	Action Statement
Independence	Powers and duties will be applied in an open, unbiased manner. There will be no conflict of interest or undue influence during any stage of the review process. Every effort will be made to provide timely, accurate and fair recommendations.
Respect	Every individual in contact with the Office of the Seniors' Advocate will be treated with respect. Differing opinions will be valued in an open, collaborative spirit.
Diversity	Every person is unique and the seniors' population, as a group, are not all alike. Differences in experiences and opinions will be welcomed and used to build an open, accepting and strong service to the public.
Empowerment	This office will support and encourage seniors to use their voices. Seniors will know that their issues are important and that they have a role in making positive changes.

VISION

Through the voices of seniors, the Office of the Seniors' Advocate will promote positive changes to the systemic issues impacting seniors, programs and services.



ISSUES

In carrying out its mandate the Office of the Seniors' Advocate will focus on:

ISSUE 1: OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT

The Office of the Seniors' Advocate will continually network and connect with seniors, their families and stakeholders in order to successfully monitor systemic issues. We will continue to strengthen partnerships with community organizations and government departments/offices/agencies to increase collaborative opportunities for shared tasks. While there is no substitute for the benefits of in-person engagement, virtual sessions will be used more frequently when possible to address all limitations to in-person gatherings.

Objective 1: By March 31, 2021 the Office of the Seniors' Advocate will have increased opportunities to engage seniors and others.

Indicators:

- Identify and engage seniors' organizations, community organizations, municipalities, governments and others.
- Engage SeniorsNL, Office of the Citizen's Representative and other groups.
- Develop and implement an annual provincial outreach plan.
- Extend offers to engage with groups and/or stakeholders.

Objective 2: By March 31, 2022 the Office of the Seniors' Advocate will have increased opportunities to engage seniors and others.

Objective 3: By March 31, 2023 the Office of the Seniors' Advocate will have increased opportunities to engage seniors and others.

ISSUE 2: PUBLIC AWARENESS AND EDUCATION

The Office of the Seniors' Advocate will have continued to promote its role, duties, powers and processes. The Office commits to continuing to promote awareness of systemic issues impacting seniors as well as findings and/or recommendations of systemic reviews undertaken by the Office.

Objective 1: By March 31, 2021 the Office of the Seniors' Advocate will have undertaken measures to promote increased awareness of its role, duties, powers and processes.



Indicators:

- Enhance its Website.
- Increase its social media presence.
- Develop and distribute promotional materials and reports.
- Participate in media interviews.
- Issue news releases and information articles.

Objective 2: By March 31, 2022 the Office of the Seniors' Advocate will have continued to promote increased awareness of its role, duties, powers and processes.

Objective 3: By March 31, 2023 the Office of the Seniors' Advocate will have continued to promote increased awareness of its role, duties, powers and processes.

ISSUE 3: TRACKING, TRENDING AND IDENTIFYING

For the next 20 years, the province's population will continue to age. This trend will create a paradigm shift as the focus for many policies, services and programs must be on the needs of older adults. The Office of the Seniors Advocate commits to continuing to monitor and identify trends related to systemic issues impacting seniors.

Objective 1: By March 31, 2021 the Office of the Seniors' Advocate will have identified and monitored systemic seniors' issues.

Indicators:

- Enhance procedures to identify and monitor systemic seniors' issues.
- Enhance the established electronic records management system.
- Receive and review matters related to seniors.

Objective 2: By March 31, 2022, the Office of the Seniors' Advocate will have continued to identify and monitor systemic seniors' issues.

Objective 3: By March 31, 2023, the Office of the Seniors' Advocate will have continued to identify and monitor systemic seniors' issues.



ISSUE 4: REVIEWS

The Office of the Seniors' Advocate was established to identify, review and analyze the systemic issues impacting seniors. When necessary, the Office will make recommendations to policy-makers and service providers about enhancing seniors' programs and services. The public will be informed of all reviews, findings and any actions resulting from reviews.

Objective 1: By March 31, 2021, the Office of the Seniors' Advocate will have undertaken systemic review(s) where necessary.

Indicators:

- Identify areas where a systemic review is warranted.
- Conduct research.
- Consult with seniors, service providers and the public.
- Made recommendations and inform the public.

Objective 2: By March 31, 2022, the Office of the Seniors' Advocate will have continued to implement systemic review(s) where necessary.

Objective 2: By March 31, 2023, the Office of the Seniors' Advocate will have continued to implement systemic review(s) where necessary.

CONCLUSION

Seniors have voices and opinions about what they do, and do not, want; the challenge seniors face is in being heard. The Office of the Seniors' Advocate has been given a clear mandate to listen to seniors, weigh evidence, conduct research and render opinions in order to improve seniors' programs and services.

The members of the Office of the Seniors' Advocate are fully committed to enacting positive change through this Activity Plan. There is no doubt that our work will challenge us. But this work is critically important because it ultimately impacts every single person who is privileged to age in Newfoundland and Labrador.



CONTACT INFORMATION

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